

Band Identification Skills For Piping Plovers

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Why Look For Banded Piping Plovers?

- Band returns provide scientists and managers with valuable data: wintering locations, migratory stopover locations, first and last observations dates, and survivorship
- You can learn how birds are moving around the habitats you survey and calculate detectability

Band Identification Skills: A Summary

- **Piping plovers are threatened – avoid disturbing them if possible.** Let them come to you, or approach very slowly. No loud noise or fast movements.
- **Use a Scope** – Binoculars usually are not sufficient.
- **Be patient: it may take several minutes to identify band colors.**
- Write down type of band, color and location on the leg and double check what you write against what you see.

Piping plovers have an upright posture and start-stop feeding movements that help you distinguish them from other birds.



Resting plovers are easily missed



Piping plovers can move within their wintering range area in response to tide, weather, and disturbance. Here, birds have moved out to feed at a flood tidal delta sandbar that is exposed only at low tide.



Minimize the risk of disturbance by carefully watching the plover's behavioral cues: posture, movements, and vocalizations. If the bird responds to you by making “peep low” calls, flattening itself to the ground, walking away, or spending too much time watching you, you are too close and you should back away.



Use light to your advantage: if possible, avoid mid-day surveys when the light is harsh, and try to have the sun at your back (below, picture on right) when you are looking at the bird so you will see better detail and more accurate colors.



Distance Affects How You See The Bands



Pictures of same
bands at 50 and 150
feet with 840 MM
lens and Canon 20D
digital camera



Plastic Bands Can Fade



The band may be
hidden by feathers
or wrack



A Band Or Flag May Have Fallen Off



Knowing What You Know

- What can you see clearly, with certainty?
- What can you see that you are unsure about – have you mixed up a leg, or the band position on the leg, or are you not positive about a band color?
- What can you not see – is part of the leg covered by feathers or blocked by wrack?



1. NEVER GUESS or try to make a color that you see “fit” a particular color.
2. When you are unsure of a particular band, be clear about what band you are unsure of when you write it down:
X,Y:b(?),R not X,Y:b,R(?), or indicate in comments section
3. Promptly addressing band ambiguities can increase the chance of the ambiguity correctly being resolved.

Canada Great Plains: note white “flag” —
a band with a tab sticking out







Canada Great Plains: left leg white plastic band (not a flag) above joint, right leg orange plastic over metal band below joint



Great Plains Canada - Alberta





Great Plains US





US Great Plains





Challenging Green Flag Splits



Great Lakes, old style – left leg red plastic band over metal band, right leg orange plastic over green plastic (“-,RX:-,OG”)



For additional information on Great Lakes banded birds,
go to http://www.waterbirds.umn.edu/pip_banded.html

Great Lakes New Format



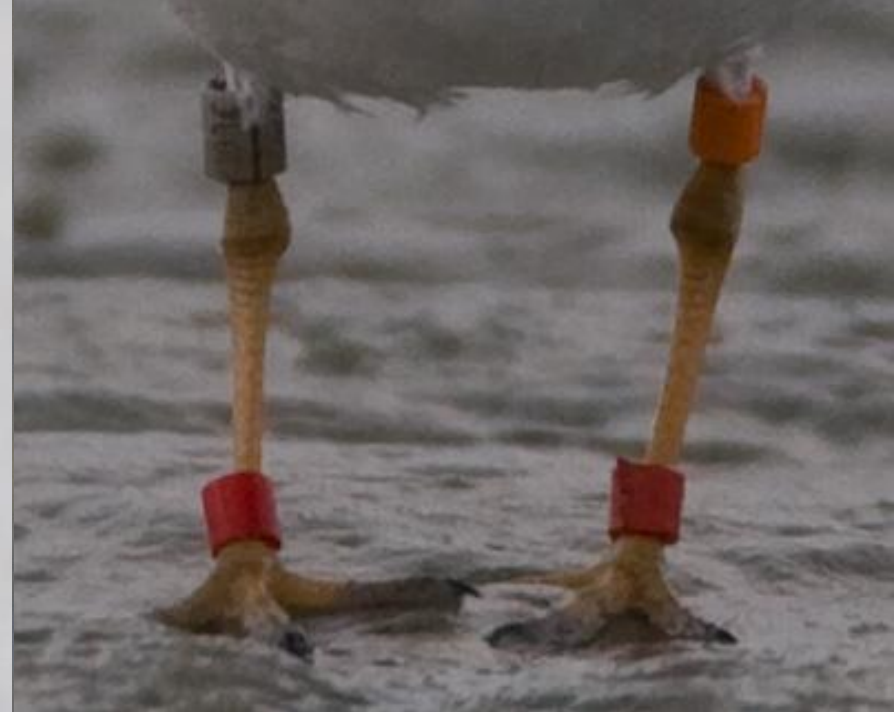
Of,GO: X,B



Great Lakes Brood Marker



Brood Marker — 2005 and Later





Atlantic US



Atlantic Canada



Bahamas: No Metal Band, White on
Lower Leg, Black Flag



Ann Maddock

Common Band Reading Errors

- Switching the Left and Right Leg
- Switching the upper (tibia) and lower (tarsus) parts of the leg
- Mixing up colors:
 - red and orange
 - light blue, white, and light green
 - dark blue and black
 - gray and metal
 - dark blue/red split and black/pink split

- Mixing up a split and triple split band
- Two bands of the same color appear to be one band
- Is it a band or a flag?
- You see the bands correctly in the field, but you write the bands down incorrectly on the data sheet
- Correct information from the data sheet is incorrectly entered into the computer database

Quiz Time

(This Will Happen In Real Life!)

Which Leg Is the Orange Flag On?



Right Leg Upper: Band Or Flag?





What Are the Bands?

What are You Not Sure Of?



How Many Bands?









Single Band or Two Bands?



Left Leg, Below the Joint, Lower Band: Is it Metal or Plastic?



Which is the metal band?





What is the Color Band?



What color are the bands on the Lower Left?





Light Green, Light Blue, or White?



Split or Triple Split?



What is the band combination?
What Population?



Great Plains US



Acknowledgements

Diane Amirault-Langlais, Mary Brown, Dan Catlin, Jonathan Cohen, Francie Cuthbert, Peter Doherty, Jim Fraser, Paul Goossen, Cheri-Gratto Trevor, Olivia LeDee, David Prescott, Kacy Ray, Erin Roche, Francois Shaffer, Mark Sherfy, and Jennifer Stucker